



The **5th** Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day celebrated on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 by **NINA FOUNDATION**, wearing the famous blue ribbon, gave birth to 2 very inspiring **trailblazers for the year 2013**. Once again, this annual, august gathering wore blue ribbons to celebrate this eventful evening of **Shravanam** and **Mananam**! The well-attended function reflected that no one allowed the inclement rain to dampen our spirits- be they SCI friends from afar or our guests. Friends! Thank you for encouraging us and always being with us **“to walk together for a wonderful tomorrow”**.

Aged 12 years, Nina Foundation has come a long way in its mission for the cause of the spinal cord-injured. Its mantra is to inject hope, holistic independence and to renew their spirit of life, to walk together for a wonderful tomorrow. With medical research and advances in technology, this long-awaited special day we believe is just round the corner.

Bijal Shah, our nightingale sang the invocational prayer ‘Paalan Haar’. What a way to start this special day! Senior Associate Ms. Vidya Shenoy who wrote the script was also compere of the evening. She spoke in multi-languages to the comfort of a mixed audience. On behalf of Nina Foundation, Vidya welcomed all our honoured guests with a heartfelt Namaste! Guests were requested to give their mobiles or any other contraptions a rest so that all present could just relax and enjoy the evening’s programme!!

The honoured Chief guest of this evening was Mrs. Rajashree-ji Birla, who she described as “an epitome of inspiration, a *stithapradnya* who dealt her cards of life with poise and equanimity”. *“aisee ek maahaan, vinamra, yashasvi, devganeet, karmayogini hain jinhoney apnaa nijee jeevan samaaj seva ko hee samarpit kiya hai. Inko yahee samaaj-sevaa devpooja ban gayee hai”*. We are all grateful to her for having made time and gracing our very special evening!

We are all aware that Rajashree-ji is a successful woman entrepreneur, chairperson and director on the board of all major Aditya Birla Group of Companies in India and overseas. To name a few, she is a recipient of many awards like Seva Shiromani, Pride of India, “Polio Eradication Champion” Award, Global Golden Peacock Award. In recognition of the exemplary work done by Rajashree-ji she has been bestowed the coveted “Padma Bhushan” award in the area of social work.

*Karmaney evadhikaras te ma phalesu kadacana ma karma-phala-hetur bhur ma te sango 'stva akarmani*. Chapter 2, verse 47 of the Srimad Bhagavad-Gita states “your right is to work only. But never to its fruits: let not the fruits of action be thy motive nor let thy attachment be to inaction”. Shrimati Rajashree-ji does exactly this. Guests were shown a *jhalak* of her very personal, social commitments. She is a dignified, sensitive philanthropist who is silent, compassionate, humble and most importantly, with a personal hands-on commitment in all her endeavours. Established in 1995 in memory of her husband, late Shri Aditya Birla, a public charitable trust, Aditya Birla Foundation chaired by Shrimati Rajashree-ji ploughs back some corporate profits of the Aditya Birla Group into projects that include community initiatives, welfare-driven initiatives and path-breaking work in rural areas and tribal belts which focuses on education, schools, healthcare centers, infrastructure development such as community centers, housing, providing water and electricity. Women empowerment programs, reaching out to physically impaired people, widow remarriages and dowry-less marriages, too, are also matters of concern to her. Many underprivileged are given free medical treatment at their hospitals and about 18,000 students receive free education at the 42 Aditya Birla Schools. Thanks to her efforts, we see that in the near future, at least 18,000 more families will cross well ahead and above the poverty line! Also, mention must be made of the Polio Eradication Drive in collaboration with health departments across the country, Municipal

Corporation of Greater Mumbai and Rotary International, has been supporting the polio eradication drive and commendably has seen no polio case been reported in the last two years! As a patron of Indiabuilds Habitat for Humanity India, and its Global Committee, since 2002, Shrimati Rajashree-ji has been a champion of uplifting India's downtrodden by providing safe and decent shelter. **A true 'karmayogi'**. Besides being a pillar to her family, her *vasudaikha kutumbam* includes 7 million people in over 3000 villages that have benefited by services of their hospitals, **schools and other** projects. Her personal goal is to impact the lives of 500,000 people by helping build 100,000 houses by 2015. We, at Nina Foundation, wish her Divine Grace for the success in this endeavoring target! And, it is interesting to know that she is interested in fine arts and culture and heads the "Sangeet Kala Kendra" as its president.

She shared with the audience of her family tradition of humanitarian services right from her father-in-law, the late G.D. Birla's times to date. Of how they have been concerned and involved with children in need of special care their treatment and training, "population first", India. Dr. Bhojraj felicitated Rajashree-ji after which she addressed the audience. She said she was truly inspired with the work Nina Foundation is doing and encouraged all our members to take big strides on the path of progress and inclusion.

Academic partnership of Welingkar Institute Of Management-India's fastest growing B-school-thanks to the magnanimity of Prof. Dr. Uday Salunkhe, Group Director, with Nina Foundation continued for the 5<sup>th</sup> year. Senior associate, Dr. Dhruv Mehta, Nina Foundation specially acknowledged this with a token of appreciation. Thereafter, Prof. Dr. Uday Salunkhe spoke of a combine of education and practical corporate experience that goes a long way in professional development.

Also special guests were felicitated: Dr. Pragya Ram Group Executive President: Corporate Communications, Aditya Birla Group\_by Trustee, Dhaval Mehta, Padmashri Kanubhai Tailor from Surat, who runs a big school for children with disability and is also President, Disable Welfare Trust of India and of Shri Ketan Suthar, Under-Secretary of the Govt. of Gujarat.by Trustee, Dr. Parinaz Humranwala. Special mention was made of friends of Nina Foundation, Dr. Athreya, Mrs. Usha Chandrashekar, Mr. Sagar Tejura, Dr. D. P. Mehta, Mrs. Vasumati Dharap, Mr.Himmatda Advani, Mrs. Panthaki, Dr. Devlekar, Mrs. Jessie, Mrs. Shamim Akhtar. Welingkar Institute of Management, Advertising partner, entire team of Kreate Advertising, Dr. Nergish Wankhadia- Humranwala Homeopathic Clinic, Shri Nandkumar Hendre of Print House India Private Limited, Madhu Narangji of Better Services (Trophies), Nihar and Meera Mehta of Tribal Route, who have sponsored our gifts every year), Ferdinand Rodericks of Ferro-Equip for special ramps for all our events and Manish Manwani, our budding music talent for the evening.

Nina Foundation's Trustees, Dr. S. Y. Bhojraj, respected spine surgeon, Lilavati Hospital, Mumbai, a very sensitive homeopath, Dr. Parinaz Humranwala, MD, Mr. Dhaval Mehta, CMD and anchor of Kreate Advertising and Dr. Ketna Mehta, founder Trustee and Editor & Associate Dean Research, We School. Senior Associates Dr. Dhruv Mehta and Vidya Shenoy were introduced to the audience.

Dr Himanshu Doshi Doctor, Oil Rig Enesco Shipping, Dr Riten Pradhan, Orthopedic Surgeon, UK, are out of India. Also Dr. S. Sagade, a very caring Urologist, Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai, Dr. V C Jacob, Ace Physiotherapist, and Retired H.O.D., Sion Hospital, Mumbai and Anu Ganesh were unable to be present. All, however, sent their greetings and good wishes to those present that evening.

Thereafter, Dr. Ketna Mehta addressed the audience presenting the philosophy of Nina Foundation. She spoke of how it is essential to have an inclusive society and encouraged all SCI members to be independent and work towards fulfilling their dream.... Of WINNING the game called 'life'. Nina Foundation lauded the achievements of some members and encouraged them further which was expressed by having Dr. Bhojraj present gift cheques to Dinkle Shah for securing 75% in HSC,

Sanika Shasane 75% in SSC, Kunal Nalawade, a scholarship to pursue technical education and Nisha Gupta, an active wheelchair as a gift for her forthcoming marriage to be celebrated in July.

Then came the time for the Nina Foundation awards. *Iss khass shyamm mein do aisey vyaktiyoankaa samaanit kiya gayaa jinhoney apnaa naam aur hastee sitaron se zyaadaa prakashit kiya hai. Naa kewal apney zindagi mein nayee roshnee laayee lekin doosronko ek prabhaavik maargdarshan kiya.*

Nina Foundation which promotes and works towards an inclusive society is very proud of these role models and honors them as it recognises people with spinal injuries, appreciates and salutes these heroes who have worked extremely hard to reach their destinations and converted their dreams into reality besides raising the bar of achievement higher for not only themselves but for all of us. India is blessed with bounties of nature, its diversity and people with different belief systems. However, our awardees are chosen without bias, i.e. irrespective of geographic, religious, linguistic or ethnic differences. Diversity and inclusion concerns each of us as we go into the sunset of our lives, as anyone can be affected by significant impairment or disability through stress or mental sickness.

It is strongly committed to its mission of rehabilitation of people with spinal cord injury and Nina Foundation has instituted the **Rockstar Award** to recognise that individual who has, with exemplary courage, faced and won battles in life, in spite of having spinal cord injury. By presenting this Rockstar Award, Nina Foundation “renews the spirit of life”. It is proud that this achiever also encourages others to reach the top in whatever vocations they choose.

*Yeh rockstar puraskaar iss shaks ko diya jaata hai jisme jeevan ki samasyaonko hattaake ek aisa mukkaam pahooncha hai jo kabiley taarif hai.*

*Jo vyakti aayushyaat aapley dukh kivhma kashta visroon ek dhaadasiney aapla ek onchyaatlaa onch mukaamaawar pohochto, tyaaalaach, hey puraskaar dile jaate.*

**Our 5<sup>th</sup> Rockstar Awardee for the year 2013 was announced.....**

**Mr. Kiran Jani Of Ambaji, Gujarat... Amaara aatmabal nu jeevit pushp.**

Trustee Dhaval Mehta read the citation being awarded to Mr. Kiran Jani. Kreate Advertising team created a beautiful film that reflected the persona of Mr. Kiran Jani and designed the coveted Rockstar Trophy, too. Shri Madhu Narang, Managing Director Of Better Services crafted and sponsored the beautiful Rockstar Trophy that was awarded to him by our honoured Chief Guest of the evening, Shrimati Rajashri-ji Birla along with the citation and gift goodie-bag. A popper gun that burst out tinsel marked this celebration after which, Kiranbhai gave his acceptance speech. His family- wife Meena, daughter Mayuri and son-in-law, Yash Joshi were invited on the podium to share his joy, too! Of course, our veteran photographer Jaisukhbhai was all set to click and shoot pictures for posterity!

Before the next award, there was a music session by budding musician Manish Manwani. Vidya mentioned that Leopold Stokowski said: “a painter paints his pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence”. So, she addressed Manish, that we would provide him the silence and that he provide us the music!!! And so, Manish played on.....

In 2011, Nina Foundation introduced **Willstar Award** that reflects the indomitable spirit of life that Nina Foundation stands for “to walk together for a wonderful tomorrow” with a head held high! A life that is truly filled with hope renewed, positivity and achievement! For the one who in the journey of life shows courage, grit and determination to overcome all obstacles and rises high, in spite of challenges faced by him/her.

**DR. PADMA PATIL of Akola, Maharashtra** was declared this year’s winner!

Trustee Dr. Parinaz Humranwala read the citation and a beautiful film on her by Kreate Advertising team was screened for the audience. This coveted Willstar Trophy, too, was designed by them and crafted and sponsored by Shri Madhu Narang, Managing Director Of Better Services was awarded by Honoured Chief Guest of the evening, Shrimati Rajashri-ji Birla along with the citation and a purse.

This award too was celebrated with a tinsel-bursting popper gun, after which, Dr. Padma Patil expressed her joy at the recognition given to her. Her words inspired all present. Needless to say she was truly overwhelmed! Her son, Chaitanya was invited on the podium to be another star in 'her moment' too! Of course here too, Jaisukhbhai captured this beautiful moment

Mr. Kiran Jani and Dr. Padma Patil, the newly crowned champions of Nina Foundation were thunderously applauded for their incredible achievements and remarkable stories of courage.

After the awards, 'Doctor' Manish once again belted some more numbers. For didn't musician John A. Logan said, "Music is the medicine of the mind". Some more excitement came in the form of a lucky dip. A bowl having chits of our members' names was brought onto the podium. The chit was picked up by our honoured Chief guest of the evening, Mrs. Rajashree-ji Birla who announced the winner as Imran Qureshi. He received his prized gift with much excitement!

At the start, Vidya had said this was an evening of *Shravanam* and *Mananam*- that is to 'hear' and 'think'. She said that these awards are not one-off events that we can forget about as soon as we leave the hall. But, we must see this as a step in the continuing journey of the emancipation of less-abled people and their determination to seize control of their own lives with dignity and success. That we must see the person who has made it in life through determination diligence and perseverance. See the person not their tragedy, see them as individuals not as victims. Herman Melville said, "We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects." This can be done only we can work towards this goal together, at a personal and social level.

Special mention of and thanks were given to our honoured guests, Smt. Rajashree-ji Birla, Dr. Pragya Ram, colleagues, members, sponsors, volunteers, Pooja Khedekar who coordinated the volunteers and the arrangements, photographer Jaisukhbhai, Madhu for the blue ribbons, Manish our singer, WE School student Team, WE School Team, Bhavna, Madhu, Oliver for telephone calls, Mohammed, Hardik for on-ground support, Namrata and her mother, Jayshreeben Mehta, Anu for inputs on Padmatai's life sketch. Ms. Maya Kishore-SCI's Sharan, Dr. Dhruv Mehta's a committed team of physiotherapists who look after our members under the steering of Dr. Dhruv Mehta, viz., Dr. Sanket Khadilkar, Dr. Avinash Desai Mr. Mayur Nankar, Ms. Sini Joseph, Mr. Sushant Gandhi, Mr. Yogesh Shinde, Mr. Nitish Mathew, Mr. Aditya Sawant, were specially felicitated.

There was more fun coming.... Those who wished to see themselves wild with funny wigs and glasses were allowed this too as a special Fun-Foto booth was arranged for guests. It was just great to see so many friends who got themselves photographed and enjoy their "new-look" before proceeding for a sumptuous "Meet and Greet" dinner downstairs that was arranged on the ground floor. All things come to an end and good things, even faster! Swift-handed, eagle-eyed photographer, Jaisukhbhai captured this very memorable evening on-camera and film! On-the-spot feedback from our esteemed guests was heartening enough for us to get ready for another event!

So you see you at the next programme!

≈ Vidya Shenoy, Senior Associate, Nina Foundation ≈